

History All Over

Noted Restoration historian, Earle Irvin West, in his study of the growth of the church during the 1800's observed, "once converted, they (the Christians) worked intensely to convert others. They were convinced they were right and would have others to be. The whole restoration movement soon took on the color of belligerency and aggressiveness." The irony of this belligerent movement was that, in challenging anti-biblical practices and doctrines, it sparked a unity among people calling themselves Christians that had not hitherto been seen in America.

It wasn't long, however, until clouds of division and dissension arose to dissolve the unity like acid rain. Tolbert Fanning, commenting on the Missionary Society that was dividing the church stated: "No other proof is necessary to establish the fact that an apostacy has commenced." Two of the several problems that created this falling away were (1) the "ambition to have a name amongst men," and (2) the "desire (to have) peace with conflicting parties." He warned:

"The crisis has come... The churches are not generally walking blamelessly, and some of the leading preachers begin to talk of their clerical *"brethren"* amongst the sects, and are really taking more pleasure in seeking popularity amongst parties, and worldly gain and honor, than in teaching the disciples the whole truth."

The result of the Missionary Society controversy was a division between those who chose *"the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15) instead of digressing with those who chose to manufacture an unscriptural organization with an artificial government. The Disciples of Christ and the Christian Church have, since that time, admitted with pride their denominational standing, while the churches of Christ continue to maintain their plea to return to the book.

Today, churches of Christ are dealing with that same two-hundred-year-old problem. Some churches of Christ continue to compromise the truth in their fellowshiping of heresies, manifested in the celebrations of "worship" with denominations. They shamelessly employ false teachers on lecture venues that once showcased only the soundest preachers in the brotherhood. *"Evil company corrupts good habits"* (1 Corinthians 15:33); and *"he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds"* (2 John 11).

Many Christians today are spiritually stunted by lack of study, not truly convinced they are right. As a consequence, they are not willing to be belligerent about the truth and aggressive about its proclamation. Instead, they castigate those few who are willing to take a stand for God. This is all confirmed by the willingness of weak brethren to hold hands with heathens and fellowship apostates with the pitiful blindness to believe "Oh, they're not all bad." Sensibilities aside, kinfolk notwithstanding, and in spite of a best friend, it is past time to choose sides. So, *"choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15).